

GOOD AFTERNOON, I AM DR. REBECCA BRIDGETT, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SSA) IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES (DHR) AND CHARLES COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES DIRECTOR. THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE THE CHILD WELFARE SERVICES MISSION, ACCOMPLISHMENTS AND OPPORTUNITIES.

MISSION AND PURPOSE

THE MISSION OF THE DEPARTMENT'S SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION (SSA) IS TO LEAD, SUPPORT, AND ENABLE LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES TO EMPLOY STRATEGIES FOR PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT, PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN, PRESERVING AND STRENGTHENING FAMILIES. SSA IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CHILD WELFARE POLICY DEVELOPMENT, MONITORING AND EVALUATION, AS WELL AS TRAINING AND STAFF DEVELOPMENT. WE ACHIEVE OUR MISSION BY COLLABORATING WITH STATE AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS. THE SSA GUIDING PRINCIPLE IS THAT ALL CHILDREN DESERVE TO LIVE HEALTHY LIVES WITH FAMILIES WHERE THEY ARE SAFE FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT.

THE SSA GOALS UNDERGIRD THE DHR PLAN FOR PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST:

1. TO BE SAFE FROM ABUSE AND NEGLECT;
2. TO RESIDE IN PERMANENT HOMES; AND
3. TO RECEIVE APPROPRIATE SOCIAL SERVICES CONSISTENT WITH THEIR OVERALL WELL-BEING.

FY 2007 CHILD WELFARE GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

MARYLAND IS CONTINUING A NEW ERA DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE OUR TRUE COMMITMENT TO OFFER RESOURCES THAT CAN IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR OUR CHILDREN. WE ARE MAKING STRATEGIC IMPROVEMENTS TO BRING ABOUT CHANGES THAT ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GOVERNOR'S TASK FORCE ON CHILD WELFARE ACCOUNTABILITY, THE CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES REVIEW, MARYLAND'S PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN AND THE SSA CHILD WELFARE STRATEGIC PLAN. INHERENT IN ALL OF THESE PLANS IS THE GOAL FOR SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION TO BETTER IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AND TO INCREASE DHR/SSA EFFICIENCY IN DELIVERING SERVICES USING EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES AND STRONGER COMPLIANCE.

THE FISCAL 2007 BUDGET PROPOSAL TAKES SIGNIFICANT STRIDES TOWARD PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT WE HAVE IMPROVED AND THAT THE FUTURE OFFERS EVEN GREATER PROMISE FOR MARYLAND'S CHILDREN IN NEED.

IN MARCH 2005, WE GAINED APPROVAL FOR THE MARYLAND PROGRAM

IMPROVEMENT PLAN (PIP) FROM OUR FEDERAL PARTNERS. IN THE 2007 BUDGET WE

HAVE DIRECTED RESOURCES TO SUPPORT OUR PIP STRATEGIES, WHICH INCLUDE

RISK-BASED SERVICE PLANNING; SAFE CASE CLOSURE; FAMILY-CENTERED, NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED CASEWORK; IMPROVED COURT PRACTICES, IMPROVING RESOURCES AND SERVICES; DEVELOPING A REVISED QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM; AND MD CHESSIE.

THE FISCAL YEAR 2007 GOVERNOR'S BUDGET ALLOWANCE PROVIDES FOR THE CONTINUATION OF SOME INITIATIVES THAT SIGNIFICANTLY HELP US PROTECT OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN. THESE INCLUDE:

- INCREASING FAMILY PRESERVATION SERVICES WITH THE PROVISION OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT TO PARENTS OF CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE TO ACCELERATE THE RETURN OF CHILDREN TO THEIR PARENTS
- FULL FUNDING OF OVERALL FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM
- A MONTHLY RATE INCREASE FOR FOSTER CARE PROVIDERS AND ADOPTION FAMILIES
- EXPANSION OF TRAINING FOR FOSTER PARENTS AND ENHANCED NETWORKS AMONG FOSTER PARENTS THROUGH THEIR ASSOCIATIONS
- RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF SAFE AND APPROPRIATE RESOURCE (FOSTER/ADOPTIVE) HOMES
- RESPITE CARE FOR FOSTER FAMILIES
- INCREASING THE GUARDIANSHIP RATE FOR GUARDIANS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE TIME-LIMITED GUARDIANSHIP WAIVER PROGRAM. THE INCREASE MAKES THE RELATIVE CAREGIVERS AND FOSTER FAMILIES RATE ALMOST THE SAME
- PRIVATE CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCIES TO PROVIDE HOME STUDIES, APPROVE HOMES, AND MATCH AND PLACE CHILDREN FOR ADOPTION
- CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY FOR ADDITIONAL CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION

THESE INITIATIVES WILL HELP DECREASE THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE VICTIMS OF REPEAT MALTREATMENT AS WELL AS THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN WHO ARE REMOVED FROM THEIR HOMES AND PLACED IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE. AN INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF AVAILABLE HOMES AND BEDS FOR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE WILL ASSIST IN CHILD PLACEMENTS IN SETTINGS APPROPRIATE TO THEIR UNIQUE NEEDS AND CLOSE TO HOME. CHILDREN IN CARE WILL HAVE THEIR HEALTH NEEDS ADDRESSED WITH TIMELY HEALTH SCREENINGS. CHILDREN CAN BE SUCCESSFULLY ENROLLED IN SCHOOL AND PLACED IN THEIR COMMUNITY. THESE INITIATIVES ARE IN TUNE WITH OUR CHILD WELFARE STRATEGIC PLAN AND THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CAMPAIGN, **"PUTTING CHILDREN FIRST: TRANSFORMING CHILD WELFARE IN MARYLAND."**

CASEWORKER STAFFING

WE HAVE RECRUITED CASEWORKERS AGGRESSIVELY AND HAVE ATTAINED THE RESTRICTED APPROPRIATIONS THAT ATTEST TO OUR COMPLIANCE. THE DEPARTMENT IS PLEASED TO REPORT THAT IT HAS MET THE TARGET, REFLECTING CURRENT FILLED CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS TOTALING 1,873. WE ARE COMMITTED TO MAINTAINING THE CWLA CASELOAD STANDARD. MORE STAFF MEANS BETTER CARE FOR CHILDREN IN OUR STATE.

CASEWORKER TRAINING

BETWEEN JULY 2005 AND DECEMBER 2005, 1,844 LOCAL DEPARTMENT CHILD WELFARE SERVICES EMPLOYEES ATTENDED IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROVIDED THROUGH AN INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT BETWEEN DHR AND UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND BALTIMORE. THIS AGREEMENT PROVIDES MORE THAN 500 DAYS OF TRAINING AND OVER 50 COURSES EACH YEAR FOR LOCAL DEPARTMENT CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS AND SUPERVISORS. COURSES OFFERED RANGE FROM INTERVENING TO STRENGTHEN FAMILIES TO PREPARING CHILDREN AND FAMILIES FOR ADOPTION. THE CHILD WELFARE TRAINING ACADEMY (CWTA) WILL BUILD ON THE EXISTING TRAINING PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE DEPARTMENT AND THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND'S SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK (UMB). THE SCOPE OF WORK FOR THE PROCUREMENT PHASE OF THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN DRAFTED AND WE HAVE BEGUN DISCUSSIONS WITH OUR EDUCATION PARTNERS. RECRUITMENT FOR THE DIRECTOR OF THE TRAINING ACADEMY IS UNDERWAY. INITIALLY THE ACADEMY WILL PROVIDE STANDARDIZED PRE-SERVICE AND FOUNDATION TRAINING FOR ALL NEW CHILD WELFARE SERVICES STAFF. SPECIALIZED AND ADVANCED IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR CHILD WELFARE STAFF AND LOCAL DEPARTMENT FAMILY CAREGIVERS WILL BE PHASED INTO THE PROGRAM. THE ACADEMY WILL PROVIDE A TIERED APPROACH TO TRAINING TO ALLOW FOR THE VARYING EDUCATIONAL LEVEL OF STAFF AND THE SERVICE PROGRAMS IN WHICH THEY WILL BE FUNCTIONING. THOSE INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE THE IMPORTANT AND DIFFICULT JOB OF CARING FOR OUR MOST VULNERABLE CHILDREN WILL RECEIVE THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO IMPROVE THEIR SKILLS. THEY WILL BECOME EVEN BETTER GUARDIANS OF OUR YOUNG PEOPLE.

RESOURCE HOME RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

THE MARYLAND RESOURCE HOME RECRUITMENT PLAN ADDRESSES THE NEED FOR FOSTER CARE FAMILIES, TREATMENT FOSTER CARE FAMILIES, ADOPTIVE FAMILIES AND RESPITE FAMILIES. THE DEPARTMENT HAS ALSO PARTNERED WITH FOSTER PARENTS TO RE-ESTABLISH THE FOSTER PARENT ASSOCIATION. A PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN WAS LAUNCHED, THROUGH A PRIVATE-PUBLIC PARTNERSHIP, WITH THE AIRING OF PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS AND TWO FIVE-MINUTE INTERVIEW SEGMENTS ON FOSTER PARENTING. WE ARE PROUD TO RECOGNIZE THE EFFORTS OF MARYLAND'S FOSTER PARENTS AS DEMONSTRATED BY TWO BOARD RATE INCREASES. THE FIRST RATE INCREASE OF \$25 WAS

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2006. IN JULY 2006, THE BOARD RATE WILL BE INCREASED BY AN ADDITIONAL \$25 FOR A TOTAL OF \$50 WITHIN A 12-MONTH PERIOD. THIS WILL MARK THE SECOND INCREASE SINCE 1990.

STATE-OF-THE-ART INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

WE BELIEVE THAT TRAINED WORKERS NEED THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT TO DO THEIR JOBS. I AM PROUD TO REPORT THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CHILD WELFARE INFORMATION SYSTEM IS ON TIME AND ON BUDGET. ONCE FULLY IMPLEMENTED, THIS SYSTEM (WE CALL MD CHESSIE) WILL ENABLE US TO DO A BETTER JOB OF TRACKING THE CHILDREN IN OUR CARE. THE DEPARTMENT WILL IMPLEMENT THE MD CHESSIE SYSTEM IN HARFORD COUNTY IN FEBRUARY 2006. TWENTY-ONE OTHER LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES WILL BEGIN USING THE FULL MD CHESSIE IN JUNE 2006. THE REMAINING LOCAL DEPARTMENTS (BALTIMORE CITY AND BALTIMORE COUNTY) WILL BE BROUGHT ON BOARD BY THE END OF SEPTEMBER 2006. MD CHESSIE WILL PROVIDE IMPROVED FINANCIAL CONTROLS FOR SERVICES PURCHASED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILDREN AND WILL SATISFY FEDERAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS OF THE ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE ANALYSIS AND REPORTING SYSTEM (AFCARS) AND THE NATIONAL CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT DATA SYSTEM (NCANDS).

WE ARE EXCITED THAT STAFFING, RESOURCE HOME RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION, TRAINING AND TECHNOLOGY ARE CONVERGING TO PROVIDE IMPROVED CARE FOR MARYLAND'S CHILDREN. THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IS ALSO CONTINUING WORK WITH OUR SISTER AGENCIES TO RAISE THE STANDARDS FOR CONGREGATE CARE HOMES. THERE ARE NEW REGULATIONS FOR ENFORCEMENT AND A NEW SAFETY ASSESSMENT TOOL REFERRED TO AS SAFE-C-GRP, SAFETY ASSESSMENT FOR EVERY CHILD – GROUP PLACEMENT.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN

AS MENTIONED EARLIER, OUR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT PLAN WILL ADVANCE THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM BY IMPROVING STATEWIDE DATA COLLECTION AND AVAILABILITY, CASE REVIEW AND QUALITY ASSURANCE. THE PIP ALSO PROVIDES STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS AND IMPROVING SERVICES OVERALL. THE ACTIVITIES AND EFFORTS OF THE PIP WILL BRING MARYLAND CLOSER TO THE NATIONAL STANDARDS SET BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT. I AM PLEASED TO REPORT THAT WE HAVE SEEN IMPROVEMENT ON TWO NATIONAL STANDARDS, RECURRENCE OF MALTREATMENT AND ADOPTION, AND WE HAVE MET THE NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR RE-ENTRY INTO CARE. CROSS-FUNCTIONAL, LOCAL AND CENTRALLY STAFFED WORKGROUPS ARE MEETING CONSISTENTLY AND REGULARLY CARRYING OUT THE STRATEGIES OF THE PIP. WE HAVE PARTNERED WITH THE CITIZEN REVIEW BOARD IN THE DEVELOPMENT AND PILOTING OF THE REVISED QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM. AS YOU CAN SEE, CRITICAL STEPS FOR REACHING OUR CHIEF GOALS AND OBJECTIVES ARE

UNDERWAY. CONTINUED EFFORTS WILL INVOLVE: IMPLEMENTING FAMILY-CENTERED NEIGHBORHOOD BASED PRACTICE WHICH PROMOTES FAMILY TEAM DECISION MAKING; COMMUNITY RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT TO BETTER MATCH CHILDREN WITH APPROPRIATE RESOURCES; AND PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER AGENCIES FOR INTEGRATED MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES. THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO WORK WITH OUR COURTS AND THE FOSTER CARE COURT IMPROVEMENT PROJECT FOR IMPROVED CLIENT CASE PLANNING.

FY 2005 AND FY 2006 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS AND INNOVATIONS

SSA STRIVES TO PUT CHILDREN FIRST. WE WANT TO EXCEL IN SERVICES LINKED TO SAFETY, PERMANENCY AND WELL-BEING. ASSISTANCE IS PROVIDED THROUGH IN-HOME (CHILD PROTECTIVE) AND OUT-OF-HOME (KINSHIP CARE, FOSTER CARE, ADOPTION) PROGRAMS.

IN-HOME SERVICES

CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICES (CPS) IS THE SPECIALIZED SERVICE TO CHILDREN AND THEIR FAMILIES WHERE NEGLECT, PHYSICAL OR SEXUAL ABUSE ARE ALLEGED. INVESTIGATIONS AND SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES. DECISIONS ON SERVICES ARE BASED ON FINDINGS IN AN INVESTIGATION. THERE ARE THREE DEFINITIONS FOR THE TYPE OF FINDINGS FOR CONSIDERATION. INDICATED MEANS A FINDING THAT THERE IS CREDIBLE EVIDENCE, WHICH HAS NOT BEEN SATISFACTORILY REFUTED, THAT ABUSE OR NEGLECT OCCURRED. UNSUBSTANTIATED MEANS A FINDING THAT THERE IS INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT A FINDING OF INDICATED OR RULED OUT. RULED OUT MEANS A FINDING THAT ABUSE OR NEGLECT DID NOT OCCUR. THE PRIMARY FOCUS OF SERVICES IS TO ASSURE THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN IN THEIR HOMES. SERVICES ARE DELIVERED TO PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITIES AND ARE DESIGNED TO ENABLE THEM TO PROVIDE CARE FOR THEIR CHILDREN IN A SAFE AND PROTECTIVE ENVIRONMENT.

INVESTIGATIONS AND SERVICES

- THE FY 2005 NUMBER OF CHILD PROTECTIVE SERVICE INVESTIGATIONS WAS 31,501.
- 4,931 FAMILIES RECEIVED IN-HOME FAMILY SERVICES TO PROMOTE CHILD SAFETY IN FISCAL YEAR 2005.
- IN FY 2004 AND FY 2005 MORE THAN 90% OF CHILDREN IN FAMILIES RECEIVING IN-HOME FAMILY SERVICES REMAINED IN THEIR HOME 12 MONTHS AFTER THE END OF SERVICE.

FOSTER CARE SERVICES

- THE NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT HAS SHOWN A STEADY DECLINE FROM FY 2000-2005. IN FY 2000 THERE WERE 12,530 IN THE OUT-OF-HOME CARE CASELOAD AND IN FY 2005 THAT NUMBER WAS 10,427. THE FOSTER CARE CASELOAD CONTINUES TO GROW OLDER WITH THE PROPORTION OF CHILDREN FIFTEEN AND OLDER REPRESENTING NEARLY 40% AS AS OPPOSED TO 20% IN 2001.
- OUR TARGET RECRUTMENT PLAN ADDRESSES THE SPECIFIC NEED OF TEENS AND OTHER IDENTIFIED GROUPS. SOME STRATEGIES INCLUDE DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE MARKETING PLAN, CREATING A RESOURCE UNIT, AND CONDUCTING COMPREHENSIVE ASSESSMENTS OF LOCAL RESOURCE HOME NEEDS.

ADOPTION SERVICES

- AN ESTIMATED 826 FINALIZED ADOPTIONS THROUGH LOCAL DEPARTMENTS WERE REPORTED IN SFY 2004. THE CURRENT NUMBER OF ADOPTIONS FOR FY 2005 IS 719.
- CONTRACTS WITH LICENSED CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCIES ARE REQUESTED TO INCREASE HOME STUDIES, TRAINING, AS WELL AS THE MATCHING AND PLACEMENT OF CHILDREN IN HOMES THAT SUIT THEIR PARTICULAR NEED.
- THE MARYLAND ADOPTION RESOURCE EXCHANGE (MARE) DATABASE IS ACCESSIBLE TO ALL LOCAL DEPARTMENTS. MARYLAND ADOPTION RESOURCE EXCHANGE IS REDESIGNING ITS DATABASE TO ENABLE LOCAL DEPARTMENTS TO SEARCH FOR FAMILIES FOR WAITING CHILDREN.
- CONTINUED POSITIVE STEPS FOR REDUCING THE NUMBER OF MONTHS PRIOR TO ADOPTION IS OCCURING DUE TO OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH THE COURTS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR BEST PRACTICES MANUAL.

PROGRAM CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT SERVICES

WE ARE MAKING STEADY PROGRESS ON SENATE BILL 458, CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES – VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT. THE LEGISLATION REQUIRES THAT PARENTS AND LEGAL GUARDIANS WITH CHILDREN THAT HAVE DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES OR MENTAL ILLNESSES AND NEED TO BE PLACED AWAY FROM HOME BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENTER AN OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT THROUGH A VOLUNTARY PLACEMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES. IN FY 2005 THERE WERE SIXTY-FIVE APPROVED CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES IN VOLUNTARY PLACEMENTS AND IN FY 2006 THERE WERE 25 OF THESE PLACEMENTS. THE DEPARTMENT SEEKS A SHARED COST OF CARE THROUGH CHILD SUPPORT COLLECTIONS AND PLANNING WITH SISTER STATE AGENCIES.

SUBSTANCE ABUSE INITIATIVES

SUBSTANCE ABUSE INITIATIVES ARE RESPONSIVE TO THE COMPLEX PROBLEMS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSING FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WHO COME TO THE ATTENTION OF THE CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM. FOR THE SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF CHILDREN, SINCE 1997 SSA HAS SHOWN CONSISTENT COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF SB512, CHILDREN IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE (CINA) – DRUG ADDICTED BABIES PROGRAM. IN 2005, OVER 300 MOTHERS AND CHILDREN WERE SERVED IN ATTAINMENT OF THE SB 512 PROJECT GOALS TO IDENTIFY AT RISK INFANTS AND TO SUPPORT FAMILIES IN PARTICIPATING JURISDICTIONS. IN 2005, HB 839 AMENDED HB-7, THE INTEGRATION OF CHILD WELFARE AND SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SERVICE ACT OF 2000. THE DEPARTMENT CONTINUES TO PROVIDE SERVICES WITH AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR INTEREST IN THE SOCIAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION AND MARYLAND’S CHILDREN AND FAMILIES.

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Analyst's Issue #1:

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT THE FUNDS FOR GUARDIANSHIP SUBSIDY INCREASE BE REDUCED BY 20% TO MAINTAIN A DIFFERENTIAL BETWEEN THE GUARDIANSHIP AND FOSTER FAMILY RATES. DHR SHOULD COMMENT ON WHY IT BELIEVES THE RATES SHOULD BE EQUAL.

Department's Response:

DHR believes that the guardianship subsidy rate should be equal to foster care board rate. The purpose of the Subsidized Guardianship program has been to promote permanency for our children in care, and permanency is a fundamental goal supported through the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. Subsidized Guardianship places the child with a permanent family as a beneficial alternative to foster care. The relative caretaker family assumes legal guardianship, and promotes the well-being of children by placing children in a permanent home with their families, sustaining ties to the family unit, and promoting continuity in the child's life. A foster care case may not need to be opened, or a current foster care case can be closed.

In order to successfully move more children to the permanency, the payment amount for the subsidized guardianship should at least equal the foster care payment amount. In addition to the benefits of achieving permanency for the child in a loving, supportive family, the State secures administrative cost savings for standard foster care service costs as required for ongoing case services and management, court hearings, departmental attorneys, CINA attorneys, Judges and court personnel. The Subsidized Guardianship board payment represents virtually all costs associated with the guardianship case. Additionally, the federal CFSR process requires states to address and shorten the average length of stay for the total number of foster care cases. As more foster care cases are successfully changed to the permanency of subsidized guardianship, the average length of stay for Maryland's foster care should also be reduced.

DHR wants to encourage relative caretakers to choose subsidized guardianship for the children in their care. Payment comparable to foster care payment is a reasonable fiscal incentive, and limiting State involvement in the life of the family is another perceived benefit. Foster care services require significant involvement with families, including monthly visits as well as periodic Court hearings. However, many families would accept this extensive, costly involvement if they otherwise were required to endure financial hardship by losing their foster care board stipend because they sought permanency for the child through guardianship. Increasing the subsidized guardianship payment rate to a rate that is equal to foster care makes it

an accessible and preferred option because it would provide equal financial support while eliminating state administrative involvement for a stable permanent placement.

The children who are served under the Subsidized Guardianship are the same as all our Court-committed children receiving the same services. With the onset of current Guardianship legislation, such a move would provide a greater incentive to this population.

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Analyst's Issue #2:

BUDGET BILL LANGUAGE IS INCLUDED IN THE RECOMMENDED ACTIONS SECTION OF THIS ANALYSIS THAT WILL RESTRICT FUNDS APPROPRIATED FOR FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS TO THAT PURPOSE ONLY OR FOR TRANSFER TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES, THE PROGRAM FROM WHICH CHILD WELFARE CASE WORKERS ARE FUNDED.

Department's Response: Disagree

The Department disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation to add budget language restricting use of funds to the purposes appropriated or for transfer to N00G00.03 Child Welfare Services. While the Department concurs with the spirit of the Analyst's recommendation to restrict the use of funds to the purposes appropriated, the Department needs the fiscal flexibility to transfer funds to reflect real time service delivery. The Department believes that limiting the funds' use has a potential of adversely affecting services to the citizens of Maryland. Since Maryland law already requires that the Department, as a whole, expend the general funds as appropriated, we do not see the need of the language limiting expenditures in our overall budget of \$1.74 billion total funds and \$604.6 million in general funds. It should be noted that in addition to Child Welfare Services, the Department has other programs that provide essential services to Maryland citizens.

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Analyst's Issue #3:

THE DEPARTMENT SHOULD BRIEF THE COMMITTEES ON WHAT IT EXPECTS MARYLAND'S SCORES TO BE ON THE SEVEN OUTCOMES AT THE END OF THE TWO-YEAR PIP.

Department's Response:

With consultation and guidance from our federal partners, DHR has developed a revised Quality Assurance system that mirrors the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. This new process was implemented in three counties at the end of CY 2005. Federal Regional representatives are scheduled to come to Maryland on February 22nd & 23rd to discuss Maryland's progress and to negotiate the re-establishment of benchmarks for measurable outcomes in the Maryland's Program Improvement Plan (PIP). We anticipate that this partnership process will be successful in helping Maryland achieve the progress sought through the CFSR plan.

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Analyst's Issue #4:

DHR SHOULD BRIEF THE COMMITTEES ON ITS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE
LICENSURE AND OVERSIGHT OF GROUP HOMES.

Department's Response:

DHR created the Office of Licensing and Monitoring (OLM) within the Office of the Secretary in January, 2006. This Office reports directly to the Deputy Secretary for Operations. Since January 23, 2006, when the newly-appointed Executive Director began employment with the Office, the following has occurred:

- A 30-day Needs Assessment Plan was developed, including:
 - Response to consultant recommendations (MAXIMUS) for operational improvements;
 - Increased accountability of OLM;
 - Increased responsibilities of Licensing Coordinators;
 - Development of electronic, computer-based processes to enhance review and monitoring of all providers licensed by DHR;
 - Development of enhanced Policy & Procedures;
 - Development of enhanced training for Licensing and Monitoring staff, LDSS staff, and provider agency staff.
- The 30-day Needs Assessment Plan was reviewed and approved for immediate implementation, and is being addressed this month (February, 2006).
- Eight (8) additional positions have been identified to serve as Licensing Coordinators:
 - These eight positions will double the current strength of the Unit;
 - Interviews have been completed to fill the first four (4) of these eight positions, and personnel selections have been completed;
 - These four selected candidates will begin their duties on or about March 1, 2006;
 - This will bring Unit strength to twelve by March 1;
 - The remaining four positions were posted, and the Office of Human Resources, Development, and Training (HRDT) will provide eligible candidates for interview;
 - The Manager position (filled October 26, 2005) is a Program Manager II classification (requiring MSW and Licensure in the State of Maryland);
 - Licensing Coordinator positions are also classified at the Masters' level.

- The OLM Executive Director collaborated with Dr. Cathy Bourne, University of Maryland, and Kirk Grothe regarding the development of a monitoring database to identify statewide vacancies in Residential Child Care Programs throughout the state.
- The OLM Executive Director also collaborated with the Governor's Office for Children (GOC) and the Office for Health Care Quality (OHCQ) regarding identification of an effective electronic system for streamlining licensing and monitoring throughout licensing agencies.
- The OLM Executive Director also met with the DHR Office of Planning to begin the process of Strategic Planning, with the first departmental meeting held February 10, 2006.

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Analyst's Issue #5:

The General Assembly restricted \$1 million of DHR's fiscal 2006 appropriation until the department developed a plan to pilot differential response in one or more jurisdictions. In developing the plan the department was instructed to work with the University of Maryland's School of Social Work.

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT THE FUNDING NOT BE RELEASED UNTIL DHR RESUBMITS A REPORT WHICH COMPLIES WITH THE FISCAL 2006 BUDGET BILL LANGUAGE.

Department's Response: Disagree

The Department disagrees that it has failed to provide the information requested in the FY 2006 budget bill language. The Department of Human Resources supports 'differential response' as a model for providing a child welfare response to allegations of child abuse and neglect. The first step in creating this model requires a change in philosophy from one where the resources of the Department are focused only on families where child abuse or neglect can be substantiated to one where decisions regarding a family's need for service are based on safety and risk factors. This is the change management plan promoted in the Department's response to the federal Child and Family Services Review and referred to in that document as risk based service planning. Families identified as high risk for future child abuse or neglect will be referred to In-Home services such as Continuing Child Protective Services (generally where there is Juvenile Court involvement) or Family Preservation Services (Families Now, Consolidated Family Preservation or Services to Families with Children). All of these services (children remain in the home with their parents) are designed to reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect while increasing the overall safety for the child.

The literature on child abuse and neglect contains numerous articles regarding the correlation between risk factors such as do domestic violence, poverty, drug abuse, community conditions and child maltreatment (National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect). It is widely accepted that identifying the presence of such factors and designing service plans to effectively address them reduce the likelihood of future child maltreatment, thereby reducing recurrence and the potential need for placement of a child in care. This is not a new concept to child welfare, however, focusing the Department's resources on providing service to families based on the presence of such factors irrespective of a documented child abuse or neglect incident marks a change in focus.

Action Steps

The Department is working with local Department directors from around the state to select several jurisdictions to begin a rollout of this model. This program requires shifting the focus of a child protective services intervention from one where the determination whether child abuse or neglect occurred steers the need for an on-going service to one where the State's risk assessment (Maryland Family Risk Assessment) helps a worker understand a family's need for additional work. While this might sound like a small change in direction, philosophically it represents a significant shift in practice. The following activities have been accomplished or are planned to effect this change:

- Child welfare staff trained on risk based service planning as part of the 2005 PIP implementation. This training will continue in the future. (Both initiated & on-going.)
- Risk based service planning is part of the 2005 PIP implementation and has been added to the contract for on-going training through the University of Maryland (Accomplished).
- March 1, 2006 - SSA will meet with local directors and assistant directors of social services to gather their ideas and comments on any needed changes to the Department's implementation strategy.
- April 2006 - SSA will meet with law enforcement personnel to assess the impact of a "differential response" to allegations of child abuse and neglect to answer the question, "How will such a change be reflected in their workload?"
- May 2006 - SSA will hold a stakeholder meeting to introduce the Department's vision for risk based service planning. In addition, the Department will incorporate this discussion in the Child and Family Services Advisory Committee quarterly meetings.
- June 2006 - Draft language for any needed change in law to continue the Department's effort for the implementation schedule for 'differential response' to allegations of child abuse and neglect.
- March, April, May, June 2006 – SSA monthly monitoring of any increase in workload for local department In-Home Services on-going service program to address local resource issues via Monthly Management Report which affect implementation.
- March, April, May, June 2006 – SSA staff provide monthly research reports to management regarding the "differential response" experiences of other states.

Justification

Providing service to families at risk of child abuse and neglect will reduce the number of situations referred back to a local department for new allegations of child abuse or neglect. The Department responded to the federal concern for recidivism (Maryland was at 8.0 % and the federal rate for substantial conformity is 6.1%) in Child Protective Services cases by planning for a change in local practice that requires that risk of maltreatment be addressed in cases before service to a family is terminated. Once the service component of this shift in philosophy is complete, the Department can move to a differential handling of allegations of child abuse and neglect where some families receive an investigation and others receive an assessment for service. That change in practice will likely necessitate a change in Family Law.

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Analyst's Issue #6:

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT DHR:

1. CONTRACT WITH CWLA FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING CASELOAD-TO-STAFF RATIOS THAT CONFORM TO BEST PRACTICES;

Department's Response:

DHR agrees in principle with these recommendations and is proceeding to develop an improved, effective, reliable means to accurately calculate caseload-to-staff ratios that conform to best practices. However, we suggest that the recommended language requiring DHR to use a specific entity for technical assistance is unwise. Although CWLA is a nationally-recognized expert body, there may also be other competent organizations and university-based bodies which can provide consultation, value, and significant benefit in this caseload computation matter. Also, proposed contracts that require the State to use only one specifically-named private organization for services may run afoul of State procurement practices. Finally, restricting DHR to use only one specifically-identified entity could have unfortunate fiscal effects, since the proposed vendor can then essentially charge whatever rate they wish.

It should also be noted that FY2007 funds have not been identified nor budgeted to support this recommended consultation contract, nor is there clarity at this time regarding the potential unbudgeted costs.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 22 - 24

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #7:

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT DHR:

2. DEVELOP A PROCESS FOR CALCULATING CHILD WELFARE STAFFING THAT IS VERIFIABLE, COMPLIES WITH GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PRACTICES, AND ADDRESSES THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ISSUED DECEMBER 2005 REGARDING THE COMPREHENSIVENESS AND ACCURACY OF THE UNDERLYING DATA USED TO CALCULATE THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF WORKERS AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS; AND,

Department's Response: The Department agrees in principle to this recommendation and hopes that Chessie will provide more accurate data on both caseloads and staffing than the current automated systems provide.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 22 - 24

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #8:

IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT DHR:

3. REPORT TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES ON THE METHODOLOGY, PROCEDURE, AND THE CALCULATED NUMBER OF STAFF NEEDED BASED ON THE METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE.

Department's Response: The Department agrees.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 22 – 24

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #9:

BUDGET LANGUAGE TO RESTRICT FUNDS IN DHR'S BUDGET UNTIL THESE ACTIONS ARE CARRIED OUT IS INCLUDED IN THE RECOMMENDED ACTION SECTION FOR CONSIDERATION. BUDGET LANGUAGE IS ALSO RECOMMENDED TO RESTRICT FUNDS BUDGETED FOR CHILD WELFARE SERVICES TO THAT PURPOSE ONLY OR FOR TRANSFER TO FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS.

Department's Response: Disagree

The Department disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation to restrict funds in DHR's budget until the actions recommended are carried out. The Department also disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation to restrict funds budgeted for Child Welfare Services to that purpose only or for transfer to Foster Care Maintenance Payments. While the Department concurs with the spirit of the Analyst's recommendation to restrict the use of funds to the purposes appropriated, the Department needs the fiscal flexibility to transfer funds to reflect real time service delivery. The Department believes that limiting the funds use has a potential of adversely affect services to the citizens of Maryland. Since Maryland law already requires that the Department, as a whole, expend the general funds as appropriated, we do not see the need of the language limiting expenditures in our overall budget of \$1.74 billion total funds and \$604.6 million in general funds. It should be noted that in addition to Child Welfare Services, the Department has other programs that provide essential services to Maryland citizens.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 25

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #10:

DHR SHOULD BRIEF THE COMMITTEES ON ACTIONS IT HAS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT CONTAINED IN THE CRBC REPORT AND COMMENT ON THE CONCEPT OF A STATEWIDE CALL CENTER.

Department's Response:

On February 1, 2000, the Department of Human Resources outsourced its centralized Information and Referral Operation (telephone customer service) to a third party vendor, thus creating the Department of Human Resources Statewide Call Center. The contractor (Spherix) has extensive state-of-the-art call center capability and advanced call handling, database and reporting technology. Customers dial a single number to contact the Department of Human Resources: 800-332-6347.

The DHR Call Center handles a variety of calls concerning all of the programs and services offered by the Department, such as child abuse and/or neglect, foster care, adoption, energy assistance, fraud, homelessness, victim services, reporting changes. The call center operators determine the resources needed by callers through a comprehensive interview and assessment process. When services are required, call center operators link callers directly to the appropriate service or local department of social services.

The Call Center has provided more timely, cost-effective service to the public, using a state of the art, fully automated call center network and sophisticated Oracle database. Services are available weekdays from 8:00 to 5:00. The Department is also able to retrieve ad hoc reports for management analysis.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 38

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #11:

AUDIT FINDING #1: SSA'S RECORDS REFLECTED THAT, WHILE THERE HAVE BEEN SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN THE DELIVERY AND MONITORING OF CRITICAL SERVICES TO CHILDREN IN FOSTER CARE, MANY CHILDREN WERE STILL NOT RECEIVING THE REQUIRED SERVICES.

Department's Response:

With consultation and technical assistance from our federal partners, Maryland revised its Quality Assurance process to model that of the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process in January 2006. This new QA process, with federal encouragement, replaces the former CAPS (Child Welfare and Adult Services Performance System) procedures. Three counties have been reviewed so far under this process. Federal regional representatives will visit Maryland on February 22-23 to further discuss Maryland's progress and provide collaborative assistance in improving the provision and tracking of services to vulnerable children and their families.

In addition, the MD CHESSIE statewide automated Child Welfare Information System, will be activated in Harford County on February 13, 2006. MD CHESSIE will allow us to capture data on the services delivered, and track compliances with all the individual services reviewed in the audit. This will help us improve not only monitoring, but also our service delivery outcomes.

**DHR – CHILD WELFARE
N00B**

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 38

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #12:

AUDIT FINDING #3: SSA DID NOT DETERMINE THE EXTENT OF OVERPAYMENTS AND WHETHER FUNDS PAID TO GROUP CARE PROVIDERS WERE USED FOR ALLOWABLE EXPENDITURES IN A TIMELY MANNER.

Department's Response:

In response to the observations noted in the OLA audit, SSA initiated improvements to ensure that all Provider Organizations are directly informed and reminded of their contractual obligation to submit annual independent Certified Public Accountant audits. Overdue and/or incomplete audit submissions are recorded, tracked, and formally pursued in writing, with notification that non-compliance could yield non-renewal of contracts as we enter the new fiscal year. As audit reports are received, logged and assessed for completeness, they are then formally shared with the DHR Office of the Inspector General (OIG) for fiscal analysis. OIG staff then either verify audit compliance or note the need for additional explanations, data, or re-calculation due to misinterpretation by the independent CPA of the contract's fiscal guidelines. For those organizations where funds are found to be due to the State, formal notification is prepared and sent to secure re-payment which is tracked through the DHR Finance Office.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Issue
Pages 38

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Issue #13:

AUDIT FINDING #4: SSA DID NOT MONITOR DECISIONS OF CASE WORKERS TO PLACE FOSTER CARE CHILDREN WITH NON-PREFERRED PROVIDERS WHICH GENERALLY CHARGED HIGHER RATES.

Department's Response:

After review of the audit findings, SSA formally reminded local department administrators of the case record documentation requirement to specify the reasons, rationale, and justification for placing a child with a non-preferred Provider organization. Local department supervisors regularly review the case records of caseworkers and are to approve placement decisions and financial payments.

Non-Preferred Provider Organizations (NPPO) are labeled as such solely on the basis of their financial rates, established through the Interagency Rates Committee, as being one standard deviation or more beyond the rates charged by their peer organizations for serving children with similar levels of need. The Non-Preferred Provider Organizations may provide very needed and appropriate services and be in good standing and reputation, but their rates are higher than others. A local department caseworker, however, may require the use of a NPPO because other organizations with similar services may be full or unavailable in the child's region. Federal placement guidelines specify that a child needing out-of-home placement should be placed, whenever possible, in close proximity to their family and home to ensure appropriate familial interaction and potential reunification planning, as well as to maintain continuity of social, medical, and educational networks. However, a child's medical, emotional, and/or behavioral needs may require placement in a setting with a specific array of services that only a certain NPPO may have, or for which only NPPO beds are currently available. In case of placement, the caseworker is required to then provide appropriate documentation of the placement reasons.

The development and implementation of the MD CHESSIE statewide automated Child Welfare information system should assist with this verification, oversight, and documentation process, since the design includes supervisory verification of all placements and a required field for documentation of placement reasons and justification. On February 13, 2006, the system was initiated in Harford County and will be rolled out through all of Maryland's jurisdictions by November 2006.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Page 26

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #1:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

SECTION XX. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, THAT \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR M00A01.01 – EXECUTIVE DIRECTION, (sic) AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR N00A01.01 – OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR V00D01.01 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNTIL:

- (1) THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE, THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES AND THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE IN THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BY JANUARY 31, 2007, LISTING BY PROVIDER, THE AMOUNT AND PERCENTAGE OF ANNUAL FUNDING PAID TO LICENSED CHILD RESIDENTIAL GROUP HOME PROVIDERS IN MARYLAND THAT WAS RETAINED BY THE PROVIDER AT THE END OF THE PREVIOUS FISCAL YEAR; AND**
- (2) THE BUDGET COMMITTEES HAVE REVIEWED AND COMMENTED ON THE REPORT OR 45 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED FROM THE DATE THE COMMITTEES RECEIVED THE REPORT.**

IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD SUBMIT THIS REPORT ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

Department's Response: The Department agrees to provide a report on group home provider retained earnings but prefers to do so without restrictions on its budget.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 26 & 27

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #2:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

SECTION XX. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, THAT \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR M00A01.01 – EXECUTIVE DIRECTION, (sic) AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR N00A01.01 – OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR V00D01.01 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNTIL:

- (1) THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE, THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES SUBMIT A COPY OF EACH INDEPENDENT AUDIT OF RATE CONTRACTS FOR FISCAL 2006 FOR LICENSED CHILD RESIDENTIAL GROUP HOMES IN MARYLAND TO THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE IN THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION BY JANUARY 31, 2007.**
- (2) MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUBMITS A REPORT BY MARCH 31, 2007 TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES CERTIFYING RECEIPT OF THE AUDITS AND LISTING THE PROVIDERS FROM WHICH AUDIT REPORTS WERE NOT RECEIVED;**

(3) AND THE BUDGET COMMITTEES HAVE REVIEWED AND COMMENTED ON THE REPORT OR 45 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED FROM THE DATE THE COMMITTEES RECEIVED THE REPORT.

THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SHALL INCORPORATE REVIEW OF THESE AUDITS INTO THE ANNUAL RATE-SETTING PROCESS FOR GROUP HOMES LICENSED IN MARYLAND BY CHECKING THE AUDIT RESULTS AGAINST REPORTED BUDGET DATA THAT WERE USED TO DEVELOP THE RATES. IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD SUBMIT AUDIT REPORTS TO THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE ON AN ANNUAL BASIS.

Department's Response: The Department agrees to provide copies of the group care audits to MSDE but prefers to do so without restrictions on its budget.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 27 & 28

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #3:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

SECTION XX. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, THAT \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR M00A01.01 – EXECUTIVE DIRECTION, (sic) AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR N00A01.01 – OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR V00D01.01 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNTIL:

- (1) **THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE, THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, AND THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES BY OCTOBER 1, 2006, THAT REPORTS ON THE PERCENTAGE OF DOLLARS CURRENTLY PAID TO LICENSED CHILD RESIDENTIAL GROUP HOMES THAT IS SPENT ON DIRECT CARE AND THAT PROPOSES A MINIMUM PERCENTAGE OF THE PER DIEM FUNDS PAID TO CHILD RESIDENTIAL GROUP HOME PROVIDERS IN MARYLAND THAT SHOULD BE SPENT OF THE DIRECT CARE OF RESIDENTS. THE REPORT SHALL ALSO DISCUSS THE FEASIBILITY OF REQUIRING LICENSED CHILD RESIDENTIAL GROUP HOMES IN MARYLAND TO SPEND A MINIMUM PERCENTAGE OF THE PER DIENM FUNDS ON THE DIRECT CARE OF RESIDENTS AND THE RECOMMENDED METHOD (BY STATUTE, REGULATION OR OTHER MEANS) SUCH A REQUIREMENT WOULD BE INSTITUTED; AND**

- (2) **THE BUDGET COMMITTEES HAVE REVIEWED AND COMMENTED ON THE REPORT OR 45 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED FROM THE DATE THE COMMITTEES RECEIVED THE REPORT.**

Department's Response: The Department disagrees with approach recommended and suggests an examination of providers' staff to client ratios to ensure that children are receiving quality care. Also, the Department objects to the restrictions on its budget.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 28 & 29

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #4:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

SECTION XX. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, THAT \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR N00A01.01 – OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY, AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR R0-0A01.01 – OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT – HEADQUARTERS, AND \$100,000 OF THE GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATION FOR V00D01.01 OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNTIL:

- (3) **THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES, THE DEPARTMENT OF JUVENILE SERVICES AND THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE IN THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SUBMIT A REPORT TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES BY OCTOBER 1, 2006 PROVIDING A METHODOLOGY FOR FISCAL 2008 RATES SET BY THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE TO INCORPORATE PERFORMANCE-BASED INCENTIVES BASED UPON OUTCOMES APPROPRIATE FOR EACH DEPARTMENT; AND**
- (4) **THE BUDGET COMMITTEES HAVE REVIEWED AND COMMENTED ON THE REPORT OR 45 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED FROM THE DATE THE COMMITTEES RECEIVED THE REPORT.**

IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD UTILIZE PERFORMANCE-BASED CONTRACTS FOR ALL OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENTS THAT UTILIZE RATES SET BY THE INTERAGENCY RATES COMMITTEE ANNUALLY BEGINNING IN FISCAL 2008.

Department's Response: The Department agrees to work with MSDE and DJS to develop performance measures for group care providers but prefers to do so without restrictions on its budget.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 29

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #5:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

ALL APPROPRIATIONS PROVIDED FOR PROGRAM N00G00.01 FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS ARE TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES HEREIN APPROPRIATED, AND THERE SHALL BE NO BUDGETARY TRANSFER TO ANY OTHER PROGRAM OR PURPOSE EXCEPT THAT FUNDS MAY BE TRANSFERRED TO PROGRAM N00G00.03 CHILD WELFARE SERVICES

Department's Response: Disagree

The Department disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation to add budget language restricting use of funds to the purposes appropriated or for transfer only to N00G00.03 Child Welfare Services. While the Department concurs with the spirit of the Analyst's recommendation to restrict the use of funds to the purposes appropriated, the Department needs the fiscal flexibility to transfer funds to reflect real time service delivery. The Department believes that limiting the funds' use has a potential of adversely affecting services to the citizens of Maryland. Since Maryland law already requires that the Department, as a whole, expend the general funds as appropriated, we do not see the need of the language limiting expenditures in our overall budget of \$1.74 billion total funds and \$604.6 million in general funds. It should be noted that in addition to Child Welfare Services, the Department has other programs that provide essential services to Maryland citizens.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 29

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #6:

REDUCE FUNDS FOR INCREASE TO MONTHLY GUARDIANSHIP SUBSIDY. THE BUDGETAS INTRODUCED PROVIDED FUNDS TO INCREASE SUBSIDIZED GUARDIANSHIP MONTHLY RATE TO BE EQUAL WITH THE RATE FOR FAMILY FOSTER CARE. BECAUSE GUARDIANS ARE NOT SUBJECT TO THE ANNUAL LICENSURE PROCEDURES REQUIRED OF FOSTER FAMILIES, THE RATES SHOULD NOT BE EQUAL. THE REDUCTION ALLOWS THE GUARDIANSHIP SUBSIDY TO BE SET AT 80% OF THE FOSTER FAMILY RATE.

Department's Response: **Disagree**

DHR disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation and believes that the guardianship subsidy rate should be equal to foster care board rate. The purpose of the Subsidized Guardianship program has been to promote permanency for our children in care, and permanency is a fundamental goal supported through the federal Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) process. Subsidized Guardianship places the child with a permanent family as a beneficial alternative to foster care. The relative caretaker family assumes legal guardianship, and promotes the well-being of children by placing children in a permanent home with their families, sustaining ties to the family unit, and promoting continuity in the child's life. A foster care case may not need to be opened, or a current foster care case can be closed.

In order to successfully move more children to the permanency, the payment amount for the subsidized guardianship should at least equal the foster care payment amount. In addition to the

benefits of achieving permanency for the child in a loving, supportive family, the State secures administrative cost savings for standard foster care service costs as required for ongoing case services and management, court hearings, departmental attorneys, CINA attorneys, Judges and court personnel. The Subsidized Guardianship board payment represents virtually all costs associated with the guardianship case. Additionally, the federal CFSR process requires states to address and shorten the average length of stay for the total number of foster care cases. As more foster care cases are successfully changed to the permanency of subsidized guardianship, the average length of stay for Maryland's foster care should also be reduced.

DHR wants to encourage relative caretakers to choose subsidized guardianship for the children in their care. Payment comparable to foster care payment is a reasonable fiscal incentive, and limiting State involvement in the life of the family is another perceived benefit. Foster care services require significant involvement with families, including monthly visits as well as periodic Court hearings. However, many families would accept this extensive, costly involvement if they otherwise were required to endure financial hardship by losing their foster care board stipend because they sought permanency for the child through guardianship. Increasing the subsidized guardianship payment rate to a rate that is equal to foster care makes it an accessible and preferred option because it would provide equal financial support while eliminating state administrative involvement for a stable permanent placement.

The children who are served under the Subsidized Guardianship are the same as all our Court-committed children receiving the same services. With the onset of current Guardianship legislation, such a move would provide a greater incentive to this population.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 30 & 31

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #7:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

PROVIDED THAT \$2,000,000 OF THIS APPROPRIATION MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNTIL:

- (1) **THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES CONTRACTS WITH THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE IN DEVELOPING A METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING CHILD WELFARE CASE-TO-WORKER RATIOS THAT CONFORMS TO BEST PRACTICES INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, ACCOUNTING FOR EMPLOYEE LEAVE USAGE AND TRAINING REQUIREMENTS WHEN CALCULATING THE NUMBER OF HOURS PER MONTH CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKERS AND SUPERVISORS CAN DEVOTE TO CASEWORK;**
- (2) **THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPS A PROCEDURE FOR APPLYING THE METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING CASE-TO-WORKER RATIOS THAT IS VERIFIABLE, CONFORMS TO GENERALLY ACCEPTED ACCOUNTING PROCEDURES, AND ADDRESSES THE PROBLEMS IDENTIFIED IN THE LEGISLATIVE PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT ISSUED DECEMBER 2005 REGARDING THE COMPREHENSIVENESS AND ACCURACY OF THE UNDERLYING DATA**

USED TO CALCULATE THE REQUIRED NUMBER OF WORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS;

- (3) **THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES PROVIDES A REPORT TO THE BUDGET COMMITTEES BY SEPTEMBER 1, 2006 THAT:**
- a. **DESCRIBES THE METHODOLOGY THAT WAS DEVELOPED WITH THE HELP OF THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA;**
 - b. **DESCRIBES THE PROCEDURES THAT WILL BE USED FOR CALCULATING THE NUMBER OF WORKERS AND SUPERVISORS REQUIRED TO MEET THE STAFFING RATIOS RECOMMENDED BY THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA;**
 - c. **LISTS, BY JURISDICTION:**
 - i. **THE NUMBER OF FILLED CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS THAT WOULD BE REQUIRED TO MEET THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA'S STAFFING GUIDELINES USING THE NEW METHODOLOGY;**
 - ii. **THE NUMBER OF AUTHORIZED POSITIONS; AND**
 - iii. **THE NUMBER OF FILLED POSITIONS AS OF JULY 1, 2006;**
- AND**
- (4) **THE BUDGET COMMITTEES HAVE REVIEWED AND COMMENTED ON THE REPORT OR 45 DAYS HAVE ELAPSED FROM THE DATE THE COMMITTEES RECEIVED THE REPORT.**

FURTHER PROVIDED THAT \$2,000,000 OF THIS APPROPRIATION MAY NOT BE EXPENDED UNLESS THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES HAS ON JANUARY 1, 2007 AT LEAST THE LESSER OF:

- 1) **1,941 FILLED CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS; OR**
- 2) **FILLED CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS EQUAL TO THE NUMBER REQUIRED TO ACHIEVE THE CHILD WELFARE LEAGUE OF AMERICA'S STAFFING GUIDELINES USING THE NEW METHODOLOGY AS REPORTED PURSUANT TO (3)(c)(i) above.**

IT IS THE INTENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY THAT THE DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES INCREASE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE THE NUMBER OF

FILLED CHILD WELFARE CASEWORKER AND SUPERVISOR POSITIONS IN ORDER TO ATTAIN THE CASE-TO-WORKER RATIOS RECOMMENDED BY THE CHILD WELFARE (sic, LEAGUE) OF AMERICA

Department's Response: **Disagree**

Although the Department agrees in principle with fully utilizing all available child welfare workers and supervisors to deliver quality services to children and families, it disagrees with the holdback of funds to satisfy an arbitrary number at a point in time. The Department is committed to hiring and retaining sufficient quality staff to best serve these vulnerable children and families; however the target of 1,941 seems to arbitrary. The Department recommends that, if a target is to be established, that it be the 1,863 which was the target established for January 1, 2006 and based on the caseload plus the 11 additional positions to be assigned to Baltimore City as requested in the SFY 2007 Budget for a total of 1,874. Also, in light of the fact that many staff retire effective January 1st of each year, we request that the report date be March 1, 2007 as opposed to January 1, 2007.

The Department's final objection to the Analyst's Recommendation is that recent discussions with the Child Welfare League of America (CWLA) has revealed that CWLA is currently conducting workload studies which may alter the current industry standards of caseload to worker ratios. This may better address the staff to family ratios serving children & families. Furthermore, there are other entities whose recommendations of how best to calculate staffing needs in Child Welfare Services should be considered and may provide a better methodology for Maryland. Therefore, it is suggested that the Legislation refrain from specifying a particular entity for contracting to develop staffing methodology or a specific entity's staffing ratios for Maryland Child Welfare Services.

The Department welcomes the opportunity to meet with DLS representatives to fully understand the intent of this language so that we may jointly arrive at requirements that

best serve the purposes for children.

DHR – CHILD WELFARE

N00B

Ref: Legislative Analyst Recommendation

Pages 32

Budget Book: Volume II

Analyst's Recommended Action #8:

ADD THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE:

ALL APPROPRIATIONS PROVIDED FOR PROGRAM N00G00.03 CHILD WELFARE SERVICES ARE TO BE USED ONLY FOR THE PURPOSES HEREIN APPROPRIATED, AND THERE SHALL BE NO BUDGETARY TRANSFER TO ANY OTHER PROGRAM OR PURPOSE EXCEPT THAT FUNDS MAY BE TRANSFERRED TO PROGRAM N00G00.01 FOSTER CARE MAINTENANCE PAYMENTS.

Department's Response: Disagree

The Department disagrees with the Analyst's recommendation to add budget language restricting use of funds to the purposes appropriated or for transfer only to N00G00.01 Foster Care Maintenance Payments. While the Department concurs with the spirit of the Analyst's recommendation to restrict the use of funds to the purposes appropriated, the Department needs the fiscal flexibility to transfer funds to reflect real time service delivery. The Department believes that limiting the funds' use has a potential of adversely affecting services to the citizens of Maryland. Since Maryland law already requires that the Department, as a whole, expend the general funds as appropriated, we do not see the need of the language limiting expenditures in our overall budget of \$1.74 billion total funds and \$604.6 million in general funds. It should be noted that in addition to Child Welfare Services, the Department has other programs that provide essential services to Maryland citizens.